

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 COLOMB 01328 151118Z  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01  
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02  
SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 /057 W  
-----151237Z 088687 /10  
R 150951Z APR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7122

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE COLOMBO 1328

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJ: PREMADASA NAMED DEPUTY LEADER OF UNP

REF: COLOMBO 382

1. AFTER AN INDECOROUS DISPUTE BETWEEN TWO PROMINENT M.P.'S OF THE OPPOSITION UNITED NATIONAL PARTY, R. PREMADASA HAS BEEN NAMED THE OFFICIAL DEPUTY LEADER OF THE PARTY. ALTHOUGH LONG RECOGNIZED AS J.R. JAYEWARDENE'S SECOND-IN-COMMAND, PREMADASA HAD HAD NO OFFICIAL TITLE. THEN, IN MARCH, E.L. SENANAYAKE, M.P. FOR KANDY AND FORMER MINISTER OF HEALTH, PUBLICLY CHALLENGED THE ASSUMPTION THAT PREMADASA WAS NUMBER TWO ON THE GROUNDS THAT HE, SENANAYAKE, WAS MORE SENIOR IN THE PARTY.

2. TO END THE CONTROVERSY, J.R. ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD INFORMALLY CONSULT MEMBERS OF THE PARTY WORKING COMMITTEE AND THE NOMINATE A FORMAL DEPUTY LEADER FOR THE COMMITTEE'S APPROVAL. IT WAS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION THAT THE MAN SELECTED WOULD BE PREMADASA, SINCE HE HAS LONG PLAYED THAT ROLE AND HAD LED THE VOTING IN JANUARY WHEN THE PARTY'S ELECTORAL ORGANIZERS WERE ASKED TO ELECT A COMMITTEE OF TEN TO PLAN ELECTION STRATEGY. E.L. SENANAYAKE WAS SEVENTH IN THAT POLL  
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-- ESSENTIALLY A RATING OF POPULARITY WITHIN THE PARTY (REF-TEL).

3. PREMADASA'S FORMAL SELECTION SOLIDIFIES HIS CREDENTIALS TO BE CONSIDERED AS LEADER OF THE PARTY WHEN 70-YEAR OLD J.R. JAYEWARDENE EVENTUALLY STEPS DOWN OR DIES. PREMADASA'S POSITION HAS ALWAYS BEEN PROBLEMATIC, GIVEN HIS POOR, HOW

CASTE ORIGINS AND THE LACK OF PRECEDENT FOR ANYONE BUT A GOYIGAMA CASTE MEMBER TO BE ELECTED PRIME MINISTER. HIS SELECTION IS ALREADY BEING TOUTED ON THE HUSTINGS AS REFLECTING THE UNP'S ROLE AS THE PARTY OF THE COMMON MAN.

4. THE DEFEAT OF SENANAYAKE IN THIS INTRAPARTY BATTLE IS ANOTHER INDICATION THAT THE OLD WARHORSES OF THE UNP WILL CONTINUE TO BE DOWNGRADED IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN AS PART OF THE ATTEMPT TO FORGE A NEW AND PROGRESSIVE IMAGE FOR THE PARTY. SENANAYAKE HAS TAKEN HIS DEFEAT WELL, MAKING PURRING, CONCILIATORY SOUNDS TOWARD THE LEADERSHIP.  
REED

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NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PARTY LEADERS, OPPOSITION PARTIES  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
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**Decaption Note:**  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
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**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
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